

The Norman Conquest

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In July, 1071, a fleet of fifty ships collected by Guiscard from Bari and the Apulian towns appeared before Palermo and landed the Duke and his troops on the east side of the city where the river Oreto joins the sea, Roger meanwhile, with an army of 18,000 men, approached from the land side and joined his brother.

Palermo was for that age a vast city, with 300 mosques, and a population probably amounting to 300,000. The Normans, however, completely enclosed the city from the land side during the autumn and winter of 1071, while their fleet though it could not entirely blockade the harbour prevented any effectual relief coming by sea. The defenders also could hope for little help from the Moslems of the interior since Serlo had been charged to vigorously prosecute the war in the hills about Castrogiovanni. Roger watched the siege from the south-west, while Guiscard lay before the quarter of old Palermo which was called Khalesa (the chosen) and which stretched from the modern Porta Felice to the Porta dei Grechi and San Francisco, On January the 7th, 1072, the Duke resolved to storm the city. An attack which was merely a feint was made by

Roger upon
the south-west; meanwhile, Guiscard
set up his
ladders against the walls of Khaleda
and forced
Ms way in near the modern Convento
della Gancia
The city might yet have resisted, but
after two
days a party of resistance yielded on
terms. By
these the Moslems were to practise
their religion